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ABSTRACT

This booklet offers parents guidance on teaching their children attitudes, learning skills, and study skills that will help them succeed in school. Section 1 focuses on the creation of a shared learning environment in the home. Parents are encouraged to set limits, establish routines, provide a secure atmosphere of encouragement and support, listen to their children, create learning opportunities, and help their children approach school eagerly and with the expectation of success. Section 2 considers the parents' role in helping children practice and apply what they have learned in school. Using a question-answer format, this section explains what homework is, how much homework is to be expected, when and where children should study, how parents can know what their child is supposed to be studying, and what the parent should and should not do. Short lists of learning strategies and learning aids are presented, as well as advice on working with teachers. Section 3 contains tips and guidelines for helping children study different subjects, including reading, writing, speaking, listening, mathematics, science, social studies, and foreign languages. Section 4 offers advice on changing problem situations and provides a list of warning signs and ideas for getting a child back on course. Finally, section 5 stresses the importance to children of their parents' attention and support. (AC)

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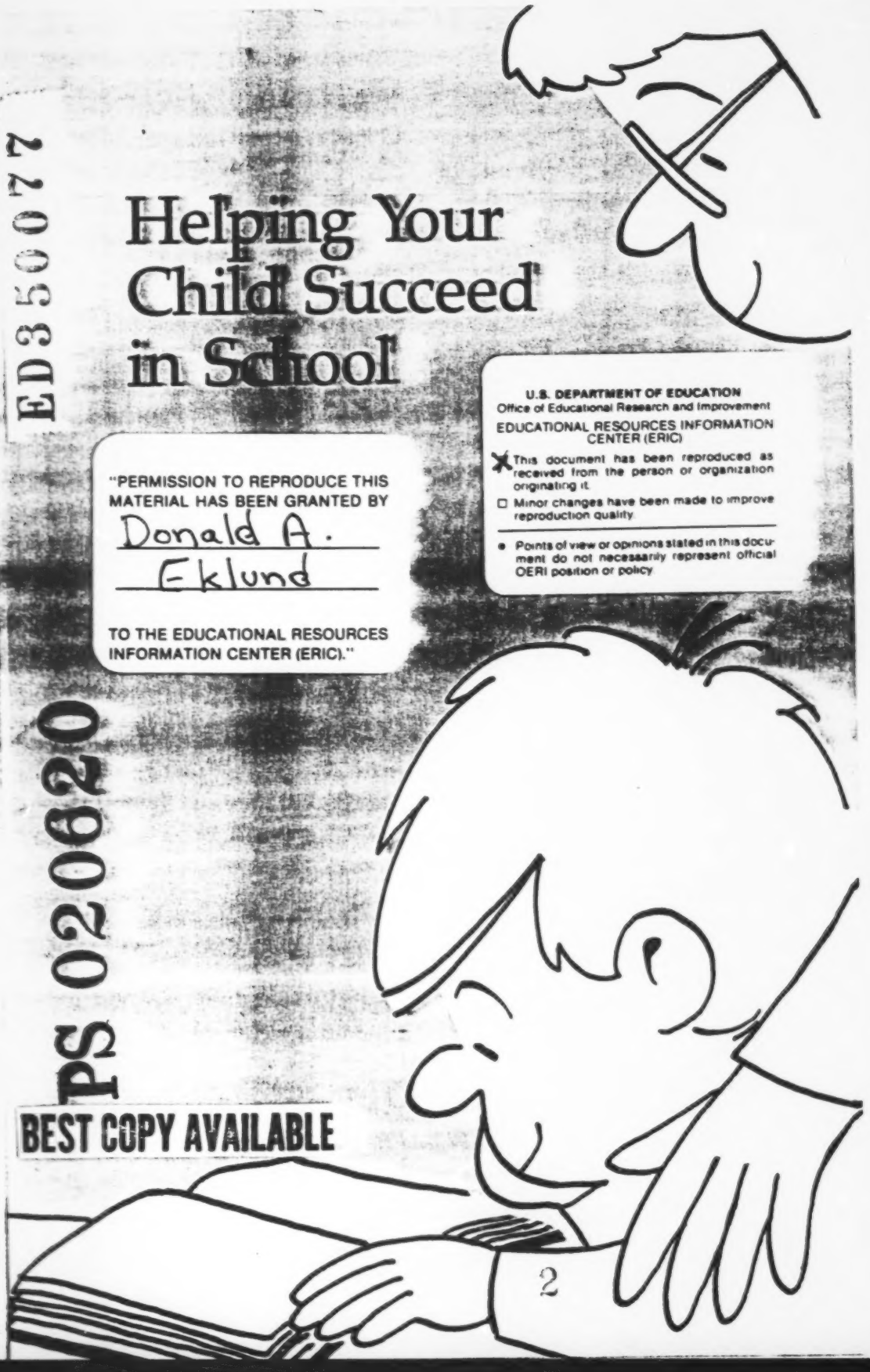

Helping Your Child Succeed in School

Learning and school are at the heart of every parent-child relationship. For many years, school is the major undertaking that parents and children work on together. The more involved a parent is in his or her child's learning, the more likely it is that child will succeed in school and in life.

Yet, the world of knowledge is advancing so rapidly that many parents are uncertain about what form their involvement should take. This booklet was created with the help of parents, students and educators willing to share their insights and success tips with other parents who are already on the road—or soon to embark—on their child's journey through school. We hope that you will find it a useful tool in guiding your child's educational journey.

The Association of American Publishers
School Division

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Laying the Foundation for a Learning Environment

All parents want their children to succeed in school. And every child can succeed in school, even if he or she is not a straight-A student.

Success in school is shown in many ways. Of course, grades are an important measure, so every child should be encouraged to reach learning goals and make the best grades possible.

Success is also measured by the child's ability to get along with others. An important part of learning is communicating and cooperating with other children and adults to reach group and personal goals.

From the time a child enters school, teachers will begin to work with his or her academic and social potential, seeking to nurture the skills, not only of a top-flight student, but of a successful lifelong learner.

Children nurtured in a shared learning environment arrive at school with the fundamental skills and attitudes that teachers equate with success.

However, the foundation for that potential is created in the home. Outstanding achievement in school cannot be imposed by teachers. It begins in the child-parent relationship with the skills and attitudes taught to the child for school and for life.

Beginning with Basics

Some of the most important skills and attitudes for success in school must be taught by parents before a child enters school.

Limits. As children develop, they are constantly testing the limits – physical, social, and intellectual – where their mastery ends and the mastery of other people or forces must be acknowledged. Parents of successful students teach them to respect limits, yet permit them to risk exploring those limits while seeking to expand their world.

Routine. Children thrive on orderliness, particularly when it comes to time. Parents of successful youngsters keep fairly regular schedules and inform their children of the elements of that schedule. When plans are changed, children are updated so that they hold clear expectations and experience the satisfaction of having their expectations fulfilled. As children get older, parents should include them in planning so that they can feel responsible for input into the decision making that results in a schedule.

Security. A child's greatest asset in school and in life is her or his sense of self-worth. Parents of successful students provide a constant, secure atmosphere of encouragement and support where youngsters may test and apply their growing knowledge. Home is a haven of acceptance and love as well as a place of challenge and demand.

A child who grows to respect limits, appreciate routine and radiate security is well prepared to succeed in school and in life.

"I'm not a bad kid, Ms. Johnson – honest! I was just testing my limits."

Fostering the Basics in Your Child

As all parents know, however, talking about encouraging good habits and attitudes in children is far easier than actually doing it. What, specifically, can parents do to help children develop these qualities that will give them a good start in school?

Listen . . . hold conversations with your child.

Ask questions about things your child has learned and encourage your child to ask questions about what he or she is learning, including asking for help—learning is not always easy. Don't limit talking merely to relaying information or giving directions.

Many parents of successful students report that mealtime is an important time for shared learning—about what the child has learned, about one another's interests and talents, about common goals and values that bind the family together and create memories.

Yet, shared learning time doesn't have to be mealtime. Any regular special time between parent and child will do—before school, after school, before bedtime—when the child can try new ideas, ask questions and receive feedback that his or her knowledge is valued and respected.

Create learning opportunities for your child.

Read aloud to your child, and as the child grows older, encourage her or him to read aloud to you.

Take your child on outings to the museum, to the zoo, to entertainments like movies and plays, to historical sites, to civic events, to the place where you work, to libraries, to bookstores, and shopping.

Acquaint your child with the tools of learning—books, paper, writing and drawing tools—and teach her or him to use them correctly and treat them with respect.

Encourage memorization, beginning with numbers, colors, and the alphabet and building upon these to create ever more challenging recall games.

Develop your child's reasoning abilities by talking through choices and decisions, for example, between an apple or cereal as a snack or between one method or another of putting away toys.

- Encourage pretending and make-believe games and stories so that your child can flex her or his imagination muscles and explore creativity.
- As your child develops, introduce her or him to more advanced resources for learning—the dictionary, an atlas, a globe, a basic history book, perhaps even an encyclopedia.

Start school with eagerness and an expectation of success—both the first year and every year.

- Make your child aware that, just as you or other adults around her or him have work to do, everybody has something to do in life. During school years, school is the youngster's job.
- When your child brings home the stories and products of this job, focus on successes, not on complaints. Remember, what you value in school is what your child

"You know you told me school's my job? Well, today I asked Ms. Paige when we can expect our first paychecks and she said students don't get paychecks . . . Dad, I've been going to kindergarten for FREE!"

will value. Don't give the wrong impression that you value fault-finding over achievement. Teach your child to enjoy praise.

- Guard against shrugging off the importance of subjects that may have given you trouble in school. You don't want to influence your child to place less value on any subject or skill because they all lend to her or his development.
- Ask your child about schoolwork and homework. Pay attention to the answers. Communicate to your child the importance and value you place on success in school.
- Most of all, impress upon your child how exciting learning is and how lifelong learning is a worthy and possible goal.

Success Breeds Success

Children nurtured in a shared learning environment arrive at school with the fundamental skills and attitudes that teachers equate with success.

Success is a formative habit: mastery of each step in learning depends upon accomplishing the step before.

- They can converse with adults and other children.
- They like challenges and problem solving.
- They are flexible and can adapt to change.
- They are confident, and enjoy nothing more than greeting new ideas and people.

Parents who develop these skills and attitudes in their children create a strong foundation upon which teachers can build successes with lessons from textbooks and life.

Success is a formative habit: mastery of each step in learning depends upon accomplishing the step before. Create for your child a learning environment filled with expectations of success.

Building Learning and Study Skills

When a child enters school, the parent's role changes from primary teacher to learning partner. As the child's teachers introduce new skills and subjects, parents become partners with teachers by helping the child practice and apply growing knowledge in the world beyond school walls.

Over the years, as the child develops, the nature of this partnership will change. In a child's early years of school, the parent must serve as a sounding board, listening to the child's reading and accounts of school day activities, looking at completed assignments brought home from school, and helping him or her to build confidence and expectations.

Later, as the child grows more independent, the parent's role shifts to advisor. At this stage, the parent should share in the child's planning of homework and other responsibilities, then assist, as needed, to help the child reach learning goals in a range of school-centered activities.

In time, as the child progresses through high school, this role becomes even more mature, with the parent taking the role of a consultant who gives assistance and advice more on request than as a regular part of the schoolwork process.

Yet, throughout this passage through the learning partnership, some requirements of the parent remain constant: willingness to listen; willingness to give time to help and share; and eagerness to praise and press forward the learning adventure.

Cracking the Books

When children enter school, many look forward to the day when they will have homework. They see it as a sign of growing up. Once the books and assignments begin to arrive at home, that eagerness can wear down quickly unless homework is approached in a positive manner.

Parents hold the key to helping their children organize to study effectively. It's an awesome responsibility—especially for adults who are many years removed from school themselves—and it is one about which they have many questions.

What is homework?

One way for a child to master a skill or subject is to practice and drill on it. Homework should be activities of review and preview—reading, exercises and writing—that reinforce what has been or will be introduced in the classroom, not bits and pieces of work left over from the school day. Homework may include not only working on assignments in textbooks and other printed materials but watching television programs, participating in civic projects, and attending events.

How much homework should I expect?

Usually homework assignments begin around third or fourth grade and require 20 to 30 minutes daily to complete. By junior high school, assignments increase to require an hour per day or more. And by high school, the homework load grows to two or more hours daily.

"You're giving us homework? In the second grade? Isn't that against the law?"

When should my child study?

The time of day selected for studying should match your child's best time for concentration. Some children like to dig into homework immediately after school while the information and assignments are fresh in their minds. Other children study best in the evening after they have relaxed from the school day, eaten and restored their energy. A few even like to get up early and do homework before the day begins while their minds are clear and rested. More important than the specific time is that it be part of a routine—scheduled and done at the same time each day. When it is impossible to study at the regular time, you should help your child reschedule to be sure that the homework gets done.

Where should my child study?

The place selected for doing homework should be well lit with a good surface for writing and a comfortable but firm chair—no lounging. It should be stocked with study equipment—pencils, pens, paper, dictionary, thesaurus and atlas—and near to other resource books. The study place should also be private, away from distractions like the telephone, television or music. But it should also be public enough so that you can monitor activity, making sure that quality work is under way.

Tips for Easier Learning

1. **Flash cards**
   Use for vocabulary, math, terms.

2. **Memory shortcuts**
   Create devices like acronyms (like HOMES for the Great Lakes—Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior).

3. **Preview reading**
   Scan headings, subheadings, illustrations for an overview before reading for detail.

4. **Self quizzing**
   Make up anticipated test questions on each assignment and answer them.

5. **Notes**
   Pull out key words and phrases from textbooks and teachers' presentations.

6. **Recall games**
   Play all kinds—those that focus on vocabulary, economics, history, geography, spelling, trivia, strategy, and counting.

How do I know what is to be studied?

Assist your child in preparing an assignment book where he or she automatically lists all assignments and tests. Work with your child to develop a plan that sets out when assignments are due, when tests must be reviewed for, and other deadlines that require preparation. Be sure to include your child's other activities so that the plan will be realistic. Go over the instructions for each assignment with your child to be sure that they are clear and understood. Then, encourage your child to attack the most difficult subjects first in each study session, and monitor his or her pacing to see that the planned work is completed.

Parents should look to their children's other learning partners—their teachers—for guidance when specific questions arise about how to help with homework assignments.

What should I do?

Be nearby, accessible and willing to participate in your child's homework. This means checking homework to see that your child is prepared to arrive in class with neatly done, complete assignments. It also includes listening to reading, recitations or thinking aloud. Never do homework for your child. Likewise, you do not have to fill the role of instructor. Instead, focus on reinforcing your child's growing skills and knowledge. And continually show your interest in your child's school achievements, expressing your pride when he or she works hard and does well.

Learning Accessories

There are several essential learning accessories that a child must have for studying—pens, pencils, paper, ruler, a dictionary, a thesaurus or "word finder," and an atlas. These may be used in combination with schoolbooks and more specialized reference books appropriate to the child's age and areas of study.

The following study accessories are optional, but should be considered. Each can expand the child's knowledge and enjoyment of learning.

1. **Software**
   Tap the rich world of computer-based learning tools—many of which can be used at the library.

2. **Tape recorders**
   Tape and replay reading, vocabulary, thinking aloud and particularly written work.

3. **Videotape**
   Use prerecorded programs to supplement lessons. Record projects in development and practice speeches and presentations.

4. **Maps and globes**
   Relate history lessons, family history and family trips to the geography and geology of locations.

5. **Calculators**
   These tools have been endorsed for student use by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

6. **Colored binders**
   Store completed assignments and notes in binders color-coded by subject for reference and review.

Working with Teachers

Throughout school years, parents should look to their children's other learning partners—their teachers—for guidance when specific questions arise about how to help with homework assignments.

Teachers welcome opportunities to consult with their parent partners and encourage them to become involved in their children's schooling.

Attend school events to become acquainted with the principal, teachers and staff and to express your interest—both to the school and your child—in your child's success.

If your child has problems with homework or other schoolwork, discuss them privately with the teacher, or together with the teacher and child, to identify causes and determine solutions.

Successes should be shared with teachers—these are the rewards of their work and their measure of the child's progress.

When your child has difficulty with a specific assignment, urge her or him to consult with the teacher in the morning before school begins to ask for clarification. The child may then have some time to work on what she or he didn't understand before class meets again.

If your child has trouble completing a project exactly as assigned, encourage her or him to negotiate some changes so that the final project can still hold interest for the child while meeting the teacher's learning objectives.

When an older child seldom or never has homework in a particular subject, the parent should call the teacher to discuss why.

In short, both parent and child should foster an open attitude toward their teacher partners and seek their help immediately whenever trouble arises with homework or material presented in school.

Successes, too, should be shared with teachers—these are the rewards of their work and their measure of the child's progress.

Work together within your child's learning partnership to find the ways to make schoolwork organized, meaningful and fun.

"You're 'Old Lady Martinez'?"

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Studying for Different Subjects

As a child advances in school and masters the basic skills, the boundaries between the subject areas become quite clear: language arts, mathematics, science, social studies and foreign languages.

Each different area applies basic skills in slightly different ways to meet different learning objectives. These differences must be taken into account in studying for each subject for a child to understand and succeed with all subjects.

A child's success in school depends upon many factors, but none more than involved, supportive parents.

Following are tips and guidelines for studying the different subjects that have been contributed by outstanding teachers from around the country.

Language Arts

Words – reading and writing, speaking and listening – are the keys that unlock the world of learning. If a child has difficulty with language activities, none of the other subjects will come easily.

Mastery of language arts requires practice. Thus, it is all important for parents to listen to, help and encourage their children during the early language development years.

Reading

Encourage your child to read in a variety of forms. Good books and "classics" provide quality reading experiences, but don't rule out lighter material – magazines, newspapers, even comic books. After all, it is reading, and the objective of reading is to find pleasure and understanding in seeing words unfold stories, images and ideas.

Be a good reading role model. Let your child see you reading. Read to your child and ask her or him to read to you. Even junior high and high school students benefit when listening to adults or other children reading. And

when the child reads aloud, she or he develops speaking as well as reading skills.

Writing

Use writing as a tool in your life with your child. Write her or him notes with instructions, requests and information. Expect her or him to return the courtesy, taking phone messages, leaving notes to family members, writing letters, maybe even keeping a diary or journal.

Act as an audience for your child's writing. When your child has a writing assignment, listen as she or he brainstorms for ideas. Ask questions and discuss the topic, sharing what you know about it and suggesting some places where more information might be found–textbooks, library books, reference books, magazines and newspapers.

Expect longer writing assignments to go through several drafts. Lend an eye–or even better an ear–to first drafts. Read and listen for clear understanding of ideas and logical thinking, without demanding grammatical or punctuation perfection at this stage. Ask questions about thinking and ideas not clearly expressed and compliment well-written parts. Then, read the final copy for clarity and neatness.

Speaking and Listening

Create opportunities for conversation, so that your child can practice vocabulary, grammar, answering questions and expressing ideas.

Help your child develop active listening skills through conversation, reading aloud, and discussing the content and ideas of radio and television broadcasts, movies and plays.

Mathematics

The ability to do math is as essential a life skill as reading. Thus, it is important for your child to practice math and learn how to handle correctly the variety of calculations she or he will encounter.

Before tackling a math assignment, a child should read through the textbook lesson and examples, not just dive into the problems. The examples review and reinforce the concepts that will appear in those problems.

If answers to problems are included in the textbook, they should be used properly—to check if completed calculations arrive at the correct answer, not to set a target answer that calculations are manipulated to hit. In mathematics, it is as important to master correct method as to present correct answers.

Your child should show all the written calculations she or he performed to arrive at each answer. Then the teacher and child can refer to these notes to identify where errors might have been made.

Ask your child to explain what she or he is doing in math. One of the best ways is to ask the child to teach you the procedure: "Can you show me what you're doing?" Listen to your child's explanation. If she or he gets tangled up or stopped cold in the attempt, you can judge that your child is having trouble—even if you don't know the procedure yourself.

Oral reviews accomplish three things. They point out to your child and you the areas that are not clear to the child. Once your child knows exactly where the unclear areas begin, she or he can go to the teacher with precise and confident questions. Finally, home review reinforces what your child knows and gives her or him confidence in that knowledge.

Past math homework, class notes and tests should be saved and kept in a binder so your child can refer to earlier work when she or he needs a refresher or wants to see how new material relates to material learned before.

Help your child relate and apply the math skills learned in school to real-life problems, such as family budgets, grocery bills, phone bills and estimating and engineering household fix-it projects.

"Dad—all I want to know is what's 6 times 9. . . Is that too much to ask of a learning partner?"

Science

In studying science, your child's goal is to understand the principle or process. In science, as in all other subjects, a completed homework assignment does not necessarily mean the child has done it right or understands it.

A parent can check a child's level of comfort with science assignments by asking him or her to describe the process or explain the principle.

Encourage your child to draw pictures or diagrams of the subject, process or idea described in the assignment. By diagraming, your child can create a visual model that will help him or her to see how each concept relates to the other.

If your child has difficulty understanding an idea as it is explained in the textbook or by the teacher, help him or her consult a different reference source to get another explanation.

Create memory shortcuts like acronyms and acrostics to help recall groups of information, such as names of metals, gases, elements and parts of biological systems.

Help your child build observational skills by creating an awareness of science in his or her world. Children are naturally curious. Encourage curiosity by talking with your child about science issues of local and national interest—the environment, space exploration, technological advances, medical advances and other scientific achievements found in the news.

Science Memory Shortcuts

Acronyms are memorable "fun" words where each letter stands for the first letter of each item to be remembered.

Example:
Roy G. Biv = colors of the spectrum – red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet.

Acrostics are memorable phrases or sentences where the first letter of each word stands for the items to be remembered.

Example:
My Very Educated Mother Just Showed Us New Planets. = planets in the solar system – Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto.

Example:
King Philip Came Over For Great Spaghetti. = biological classification hierarchy – Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species.

Social Studies

At the heart of the social studies is the lesson of good citizenship and respect for others' rights and dignity. Parents can ready their children for learning about cultures, political systems and economies through activities and discussions that focus on topics like family history, social roles within the family and community, civic roles and responsibilities, and other concerns that provide a grounding for formal instruction in social sciences, civics, history, and geography.

Once your child begins to study these subjects at school, using what educators call the **SQ3R** method may help him or her master homework in these areas more easily. **SQ3R** stands for: **Survey** the chapter; create **Questions** from the chapter headings, then **Read** the chapter, **Recite** the key ideas, and **Review** them. Following these steps enables your child to absorb social studies content so that he or she is prepared to use it in class.

Survey

Social studies textbooks are structured like an outline. Your child can discover what will be covered in a reading assignment by previewing the chapter title, introductory paragraph, headings and subheadings, illustrations and captions, concluding paragraph, and end-of-chapter questions.

Ouestions

In this step, your child should take the headings and turn them into questions. As your child reads, he or she should focus on answering these questions rather than the more specific end-of-chapter questions.

WARNING–Too much focus on end-of-chapter questions may result in your child merely skimming the chapter to search for specific answers. This leads to superficial, rote learning of fragmented information, not an understanding of the concepts and relationships that are the primary subject of the social studies.

Taking Good Notes

The ability to take good notes is an important lifelong skill. Notes should be just that—brief, key words that capture and recall the high points of instructions, content and ideas.

When a child begins bringing home reading assignments, guide him or her in preparing an outline using chapter and section headings as points and subpoints. Encourage the child to develop this outline with key words and phrases found under the headings. Then the child should take this outline to class and develop it even further when the assignment is discussed.

If the child uses abbreviations in note taking, he or she should list them and their meanings at the beginning of the chapter notes to eliminate the risk of later forgetting what the letters stand for. Also, new vocabulary words should be listed on a separate page for reference and review.

As the child grows older, it is increasingly important that he or she develop the ability to take good notes from the spoken word—capturing the essence of lectures, meetings and instructions. Throughout this growth process, keep reinforcing the importance of listening and writing down the key words, not trying to catch whole passages word for word.

Good notes are always shorter than the original—much shorter. They capture the central terms and thoughts from which more elaborate passages and concepts can be remembered and applied.

Read

To get the most from his or her history, civics and other social science books, your child will need to read the material more slowly and thoughtfully than when reading for pleasure. Also, encourage your child to write down on a sheet of paper all of the key words he or she encounters in the reading. This exercise will create a checklist which your child can review—and use to recall answers to the more specific end-of-chapter questions.

Recite

As your child reads, he or she should stop after each paragraph or section and ask the question created earlier from the heading. If your child can answer it, he or she is proceeding well. If not, he or she should reread the section. Once your child has finished reading the material, he or she should thoughtfully recite the ideas and key-word definitions. This prepares your child for class discussion because he or she has already put the ideas that were covered into his or her own words.

Review

Now your child should return to the end-of-chapter questions and try to answer them. Ideally, to wrap up the study session, your child should close by skimming the material again—headings, subheadings, illustrations, key-word list—to assure his or her mastery of the information and ideas in the lesson.

You can help reinforce what your child has read and reviewed in the social studies by discussing the information, issues and ideas raised in reading assignments. Ask about the specifics of the assignment and, together, place the information in the context of personal experience—both yours and your child's—so that the child can see its relevance, not only to the classroom, but to shared cultural life.

Foreign Languages

Foreign language study can fall into three categories – classical, modern and English as a second language (ESL). Even if parents have not studied the language their children are studying, they can still monitor and help with homework.

Written exercises

Most homework for classical languages will be written. As with writing assignments in English, you can help by discussing the assignment with your child and reviewing his or her plan for developing it.

Oral exercises

Modern languages demand more oral practice. You can help by listening to your child read aloud, pronounce vocabulary words or review conjugations. Even if you don't know the language, listening helps because your child needs to hear him or herself speak it.

"I'm taking three foreign languages this semester: German, Trigonometry, and Shakespeare."

Valuable tools for oral practice are flash cards, tape recorders and videotapes. Have your child make his or her own flash cards for vocabulary and conjugations to benefit from the extra practice of writing the words. Your child can improve pronunciation by listening to prerecorded audio or videotapes, then reading or speaking into the tape recorder, playing back and listening to his or her work.

Repetition is essential to learning a foreign language—its patterns, unique sounds, intonations and musicality. Some educators believe that thoughtfully repeating something eight times is the magic number for fixing that thing in the memory.

Study after study has indicated that children with the greatest probability for success in school are those whose parents read to them, then with them, and who participate in monitoring and guiding their schoolwork and homework.

English as a second language

The child who is learning English as a second language needs the same help, described above, as an English-speaking child learning another language. A side benefit to this child reading and practicing vocabulary and conjugations aloud is that others in the household can learn English, too.

A child's success in school depends upon many factors, but none more than involved, supportive parents. Study after study has indicated that children with the greatest probability for success in school are those whose parents read to them, then with them, and who participate in monitoring and guiding their schoolwork and homework.

Turning Around Problem Situations

Nearly every child hits patches of rough going on the journey through school. When this happens, a parent may feel helpless, then hopeless about turning his or her child's attitude toward school back on a positive course.

Many times a parent can see trouble coming if he or she listens to the child carefully and keeps open lines of communication with the child's teachers. Problems and confusion in the child's other growth areas—emotional, social, psychological, physical—often show their first symptoms as trouble in school. Similarly, problems with schoolwork may first show up as emotional, social or psychological problems.

It is important that a parent recognize the subtle and not-so-subtle signs of school problems and address them quickly with both child and teacher.

Warning Signs

1. Complaints about school and teachers.

   Your child does not have to like every teacher in school, but constant complaining about all of them can indicate problems.

   It is natural for your child to question why he or she has to take particular subjects, but continual harping on the uselessness of one or all subjects is a sign of trouble.

2. Not bringing home books and claiming a number of excuses, including:

   There was no homework.

   The teachers were absent.

   Everyone was let out early.

   We have no books.

3. High absenteeism, skipping school or reluctance to get up and go to school in the morning.

4. Lateness for classes at the beginning and throughout the day.

5. Failure or warning notices about problems that the child dismisses or seems helpless to correct.

6. Poor grade reports with a number of failing or low grades.

7. A litany of excuses for failure:
   - The teachers don't like me.
   - Everyone is failing in that class.
   - The teacher doesn't know how to teach.
   - I just can't understand this.
   - I was absent too much.
   - I have to work after school.

"Mom and Dad say I should look on school as a journey. . . I just wish I weren't having such a rough ride."

8. Evidence of stress: fatigue, withdrawal, physical wearing down, change in appetite, tension.

9. Separation from school friends and activities.

10. Development of newer, possibly older friends, particularly ones who may not attend school.

At age 16 in most places, students have the legal right to drop out of school. But a child may drop out intellectually well before that. An aware parent is alert to all of these signs

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and responds by immediately talking with the child and teacher about these or other symptoms of school trouble.

Getting Back on Course

Working as partners, parent, teacher and child must seek out the root of the problem and develop a clear plan to correct it in order to restore success.

1. Insist that your child go to school—no one can help your child improve in school unless she or he goes to school.
2. Talk with your child about the problem, listening carefully for hidden clues and reflecting on other causes that may be affecting the child. Don't criticize what you hear.
3. Get to know your child's friends and even the friends' parents to keep up with what they know of the children's activities.

Schoolwork Scheduling Tips

When developing a study plan, be sure to include both long-term and short-term goals.

Begin by listing the dates when assignments and tests are due.

Estimate the amount of time required to prepare for each.

If you have trouble estimating how long a specific assignment should take to prepare, ask the teacher.

Using a special calendar devoted to scheduling school activities and assignments, work backward from the due dates and schedule study sessions focusing on the tasks required to complete the given assignments.

If your child has a long-term reading assignment, such as a novel, schedule reading sessions of so many pages per day ending with a short discussion period where she or he summarizes the section read.

When changes are made in the study plan, reschedule activities in the calendar to bring the plan up to date.

Don't make the mistake of working with a rote study plan—such as one-half hour each day on each subject. Guide your child in pacing her or his study activities to meet emerging deadlines and goals.

4. Work with your child on the study schedule to iron out problems in timing, method or environment.

5. Never use homework as a threat or punishment. This turns learning from a positive adventure into a bad outcome, confusing your child about the attitude she or he should have about schoolwork.

6. Don't bribe your child to do better. Promising payoffs for A's can act as a powerful discouragement rather than motivator to children who doubt they have A abilities. Instead, reward successfully completed projects and other school achievements by celebrating after the effort is done, not by bribing before learning begins.

7. Be open to seeking the aid of other professionals, such as tutors in specific subject areas, reading and study specialists, family counselors and psychologists if your child's problem appears to warrant additional help.

8. Once you know the cause of the problem, refuse to accept excuses from your child—or to make excuses for your child's failings in school.

9. Keep in touch with the teacher and school. Request progress reports and talk them over with your child to praise improvements and offer assistance in weaker areas.

10. Trust your child. If she or he tells you things are improving, believe it until you see or hear otherwise. Don't use report cards and grades as the only indicator of success or improvement. Encourage your child to share completed assignments, tests, quizzes, and writings with you, and look for accomplishments to praise as well as problems to tackle.

Remember, the remediation process takes time. You may not see instant results. Throughout this period of more concentrated attention on your child's schoolwork, you must stay calm, consistent and confident in your expectation of improvement and success.

In Summary

A child's journey through school is a long and demanding one for both parent and child. For the journey to be a success, parents must support the importance of learning and all that goes with it—school, teachers, homework, activities, textbooks, libraries—all of the tools for learning.

Along the way through school, parents must be sensitive to their children's needs and flexible to changing their role in the learning partnership as necessary—companion, guide, disciplinarian, co-learner, listener, advisor, consultant, troubleshooter, and always loving, accepting parent.

Children crave attention and support from parents. Parents who give positive attention to schoolwork and focus on praise, accomplishment and progress create for their

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children an attitude about self and the world that they will profit from for life. Parents who give little or no attention or negative attention—criticism, complaining, or threats—to schoolwork also create for their children attitudes that they will bear through life.

Learning and school are at the heart of each parent-child relationship. For many years, school is the major undertaking that they work on together. The more involved the parent is in his or her child's learning enterprise, the more likely it is the child will succeed in school and in life.

"I've learned the multiplication tables, I know how to diagram a sentence, I've memorized the Gettysburg Address, I've dissected a frog, and I've read Silas Marner*. . . Anything else life throws at me should be a snap."*

Acknowledgments

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